



# Banff National Park Management Plan Review



## Minister's Message

Banff National Park is Canada's first national park. The protected areas idea that originated here in 1885 has grown into a system of national parks, national historic sites, and national marine conservation areas that has given Canada a global reputation for leadership in conservation and tourism. Developing a management plan for so special a place is an important responsibility...one that Parks Canada invites every Canadian to share in. I look forward to the results of this important park management plan review on the eve of the 125th anniversary of protected heritage in Canada.

**Hon. Jim Prentice, Minister of Environment and Minister Responsible for Parks Canada**

## Superintendents' Message

We are pleased to share highlights from our ongoing work to update Banff National Park's Management Plan. Parks Canada has spent the spring and summer raising the profile of the plan review and update, discussing a variety of topics with Canadians and drafting a document that addresses necessary updates and responds to what we heard. We're interested in knowing your thoughts about the revised plan that is taking shape.

The updated plan will replace the current management plan, approved in 1997. Building on the strengths of the previous plan, particularly in the areas of ecological and commemorative integrity and limits to development, the updated plan will reflect changes in policy and government decisions and new directions for Parks Canada. It will also include new direction for visitor experience and education. This newsletter highlights some of those directions and outlines how you can provide your comments and ideas.

**Sincerely,  
Kevin Van Tighem and Pamela Veinotte**

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## Our Task



The public phase of the management plan review began in March 2009, following the approval of a review mandate by Parks Canada’s Chief Executive Officer. We were tasked with producing a plan that:

- Outlines a vision of the park Canadians want to see in the future
- Describes the results Parks Canada and its partners will work towards
- Integrates the three facets of Parks Canada’s mandate – resource protection, visitor experience and education.
- Is consistent with new national guidelines for management plans

This review is the first time all of Canada’s southern mountain national parks - parks that share similar challenges and opportunities - have worked together to review and update their park management plans at the same time.

### Vision for Banff National Park

Banff National Park reveals the majesty and timelessness of the Rocky Mountains. From the high peaks of the Continental Divide to the alpine meadows and quiet valleys of the Front Ranges, from headwater glaciers to the hot springs at Sulphur Mountain, it is a landscape where nature flourishes and evolves for all time. People from around the world participate in the life of the park, finding inspiration, enjoyment, livelihoods and understanding.

Canadians celebrate and renew Banff’s mountain heritage – the natural rhythms of the land, the art and literature which it inspired and the tradition of conservation which was born here. Visitors are welcomed into their own personal experiences of mountain ecosystems and culture, and become part of the shared enterprise of sustaining and presenting all that is authentic and valued about the Canadian Rockies.

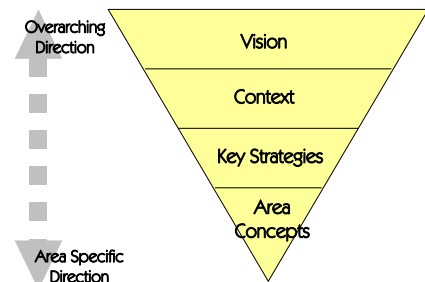
Canadians take pride in continuing the legacy of previous generations who had the wisdom and foresight to protect this small part of the planet. As Canada’s first protected area the story of Banff is, ultimately, the story of every national park, national historic site and national marine conservation area in Canada, and of the unique vision and mandate that gave rise to them. As part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Banff National Park is also treasured as a global heritage place.

Banff National Park is, above all else, a place of wonder, where the richness of Canada’s mountain heritage is respected, experienced and celebrated for all time.

## A New Format

The updated plan looks quite different from the 1997 and revised 2004 plans. It begins with an updated **vision** for Banff National Park – one that showcases what is unique about the park and reflects the aspirations of visitors, residents, Aboriginal people, and other Canadians for its future.

Two sections: **key strategies** and **area concepts** are at the heart of the plan. The key strategies are broad policy statements that apply to the whole park. Some are similar to those of the other mountain parks and some are specific to Banff National Park. Within the park there are distinctive areas that merit more detailed attention – objectives and actions for these areas are articulated in area concepts.





## Welcome... to mountains of possibilities

More than 3 million people visit Banff National Park every year. At least 4.5 million more pass through on the Trans Canada Highway. Each one of those people is special, and important. The park offers a wide variety of visitor services, facilities and programs year round, and July and August are the peak months for visiting. The majority of visitors are Canadians, with the largest proportion from nearby regions. Connecting visitors to experiences that are unique, inspiring and aligned with their interests, is a priority for Parks Canada.

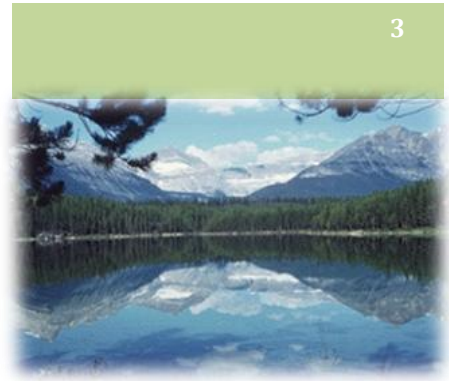
### Where we are today

Through visitor surveys, focus groups, stakeholder workshops, marketing research and the responses of more than 3,600 people we identified target markets and matched them to a range of opportunities to connect with the mountain environment. We also reviewed the results of social science research conducted in the park, considered input from previous planning processes and talked to visitors and Parks Canada staff.

### Future key directions for visitor experience:

- Build on Banff National Park's iconic profile to introduce a wide array of Canadians to their national heritage
- Maintain the high satisfaction levels among current visitors, most of whom are seeking connections to nature and culture, while developing new opportunities that respond to the interests and needs of target markets seeking hassle-free and safe experiences in inspiring settings. Treat the millions who travel through the park not as non-visitors, but as potential future visitors who should take some meaning home with them.
- Improve opportunities for Canadians who presently do not visit – timely, engaging online information, facilities grouped for convenience and security, opportunities for youth and for new Canadians
- Remain current with and responsive to changing visitor trends – demographic, behavioural and geographic
- Provide more ways in which visitors can become directly involved in caring for the park – like voluntourism, citizen science and hands-on stewardship projects
- Continually refresh the visitor experience by considering new proposals for recreational activities, special events and commercial services where they clearly support all aspects of the national park mandate: protection of natural and cultural heritage, visitor experience, and meaningful learning opportunities.

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### Key Strategies

Eleven key strategies provide park-wide direction for the next 10 to 15 years. Some of these strategies build on the foundation provided by the 1997 plan. Others reflect new thinking.

All aspects of Parks Canada's unique mandate are integrated in the key strategies which, collectively, represent the Banff approach to achieving the very best outcomes in the unique landscapes, social context and realities of Banff National Park.



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## Key Strategies

The eleven Key Strategies are:

- Showcases of conservation innovation
- Welcome...to mountains of possibilities
- Sharing the excitement of science and stewardship
- History and culture inside the contemporary experience
- Bringing the mountains to people where they live
- Minimizing the development footprint
- Connecting – reconnecting
- It all started here
- From exceptions to exceptional
- Celebrating the World Heritage Site
- Ecosystem priorities

## Showcases of Conservation Innovation

Conservation challenges associated with managing mountain protected areas in a changing world are many and complex. Canada's mountain national parks have long been at the forefront of efforts to re-think and re-design the way in which people interact with landscapes. Parks Canada's mandated obligation to ensure that parks remain unimpaired for future generations, and the high value that Canadians attach to the ecological well-being and cultural heritage of their mountain national parks, focus research attention, innovation and investment on conservation challenges they share with many other mountain landscapes in the world. As a result, the mountain parks have repeatedly led in developing new ways to solve old problems.

### Where we are today

Banff National Park is renowned for its conservation initiatives – restoring wildlife movement corridors, pioneering successful wildlife crossings of the Trans Canada Highway, using prescribed fire to re-create more natural and diverse vegetation patterns, completing the first approved recovery strategy for a species at risk – the Banff Springs snail. The Ecolntegrity Project developed techniques for connecting visitors to the natural environment. A variety of volunteer opportunities enable residents and visitors to participate in resource management activities such as vegetation and wildlife monitoring. Delegations from around the world come to Banff to learn.

### Future key directions for showcasing innovation

- Approach each conservation challenge not as a problem or a conflict to be resolved, but as an opportunity to engage a diverse community of interested Canadians in sharing information, creatively imagining options, and collaborating to implement solutions that create new stories of conservation successes.
- Implement restrictions on use where necessary to protect sensitive resources, subject to effective communication of the rationale and need to those affected by them. Where restrictions are required, provide meaningful alternatives for those affected.
- Provide leadership examples of innovative ways to enable grizzly bears and humans to share important habitat areas in ways that ensure the safety of both and engage visitors in stewardship of a keystone species.
- Conservation measures such as highway crossing structures, prescribed fires, historic building restoration, salvage archaeology and trail relocations will be designed and implemented in such a way as to enhance experience and learning opportunities.





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### Key Strategies

Banff's popular appeal makes it an ideal location for connecting Canadians to their heritage, to the natural world and the traditions of outdoor recreation.

Connecting and reconnecting are interwoven themes in the key strategies.

## Connecting - reconnecting

Banff National Park is a story of connections. The interconnectedness of natural ecosystems; the deep, emotional connections of people with this land, beginning with Aboriginal communities and continuing to present day residents and visitors. For many, a visit is an opportunity to connect with family, friends, local people, park staff. And there are opportunities to connect other Canadians to their shared national heritage.

### Where we are today

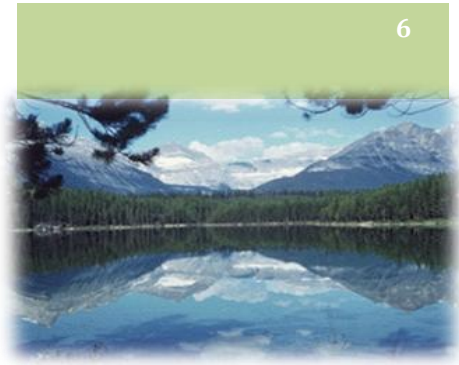
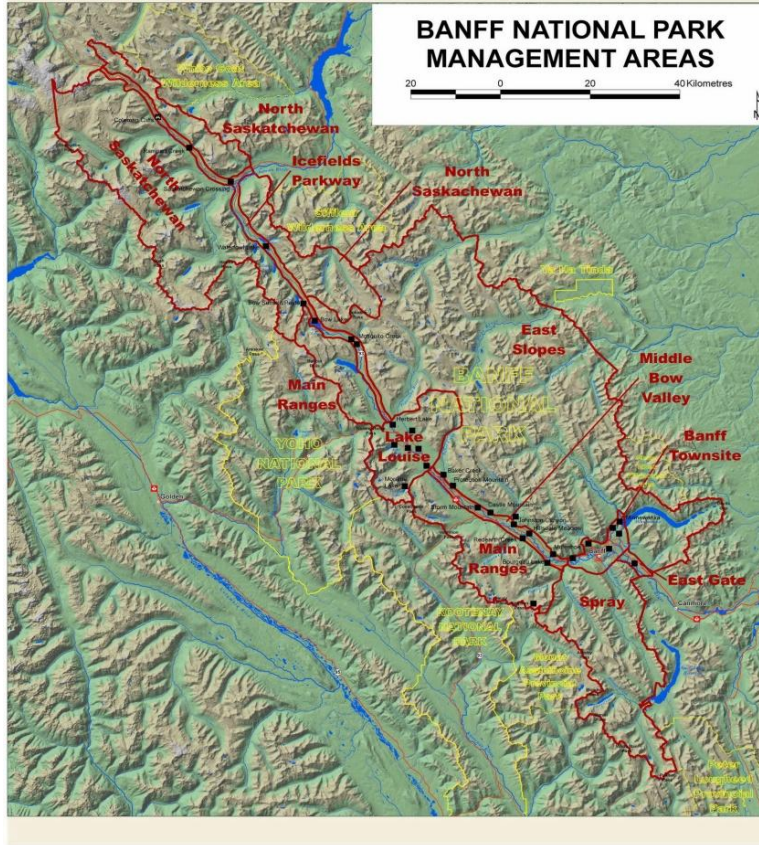
For more than 30 years, Parks Canada has involved Canadians in the planning and management of the park. Many participate in advisory groups to assist staff. Others are volunteers and stewards. More than 14,000 are active members of the ParksListens online survey panel that provides perspectives on current issues.

In recent years Parks Canada has worked more closely with aboriginal communities who have a long association with this land.

And the work of restoring ecosystem connections continues.

### Future key directions for connecting

- Provide more opportunities for people to become involved in all aspects of park management and stewardship
- Use technology to take the park to people where they live, work and gather
- Introduce opportunities that enable children, families and new Canadians to connect to nature and the outdoors
- Work with aboriginal communities to honour and restore their cultural connections to this land
- Continue the work to re-establish wildlife and aquatic connectivity and to ensure the interconnectedness of functioning natural ecosystems



### Area Concepts

Area concepts describe nine different areas within Banff National Park. Each area has a distinct identity defined by its landscape, ecological characteristics and the experiences of people – past and present. Key actions have been identified for each area that will take us from the current situation to the future best .

### Town of Banff Area

*The area showcases all aspects of the park's natural and cultural heritage and more than 3 million visitors each year enjoy a wide variety of recreational opportunities that enrich their connection to Canada's mountain heritage. Because of the wide array of facilities provided by Parks Canada and commercial businesses, the area introduces many visitors to opportunities for safe enjoyment of the outdoors and to the park's natural and cultural heritage*

### Priority Actions

- Utilize the many existing day use opportunities to introduce a wide variety of Canadians to safe enjoyment of the park and of the outdoors
- Re-design the trail system to broaden the range of opportunities, provide safe crossings of the transportation routes and reduce fragmentation of wildlife habitat
- Parks Canada's *Ski Area Management Guidelines*, Site Guidelines and Long-Range Plans will guide all future ski area management at Mount Norquay ski area, including summer use.
- Participate in the regional transit system



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### Area Concepts

Town of Banff area

Icefields Parkway

East Slopes

Main Ranges

Lower Bow Valley (East Gate)

Middle Bow Valley

Lake Louise area

North Saskatchewan

Spray Area

## Icefields Parkway

*The Icefields Parkway is recognized as one of the world's most spectacular scenic drives and growing numbers of visitors seek it out as the defining frontcountry experience of the Canadian Rockies World Heritage Site*

### Priority Actions

- Refurbish the parkway to maintain a safe, slow-paced scenic drive along the existing alignment, with design elements that discourage speeding and protect both people and wildlife
- Provide modernized facilities, such as environmentally sensitive toilet buildings, with a priority at the most popular locations used by bus tours and large numbers of visitors

## East Slopes

*The East Slopes area is maintained as mountain wilderness at its best – one of Canada's southernmost and most spectacular places for self-reliant, no-frills backcountry adventure. The full suite of native wildlife is restored and ranges freely through landscapes where natural forces of fire, flooding and predation are the dominant influences on their distribution and behaviour*

### Priority Actions

- Maintain the popular day hiking trails along the southwest edge
- Manage remoter areas for wilderness experiences in intact natural ecosystems
- Re-introduce a breeding population of plains bison and investigate the feasibility of re-introducing caribou
- Protect the core grizzly bear breeding areas at Flint's Park and Red Deer/Panther

## Main Ranges

*The Main Ranges are a popular introduction to the park's wilder areas for a broad range of visitors. The regional wildlife corridor between Banff and Kootenay National Parks will be functional*

### Priority Actions

- Maintain all trails to a high standard and profile the area as an introduction to the backcountry
- Restore the public shelter at Egypt Lake
- Ensure continued wildlife use of the regional corridor between the Bow and Vermillion valleys
- Parks Canada's *Ski Area Guidelines*, Site Guidelines and Long-Range Plans will guide all future ski area management at Sunshine ski area, including summer use.





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## Lower Bow Valley (East Gate)

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*Park visitors and through travellers are welcomed to the park and provided with the information and basic orientation that they need for their time in the park. The East Gate becomes a point of arrival, welcome and orientation*

### Priority Actions

- Strengthen the sense of arrival to the park at the East Gate
- Improve traffic flow and orientation for park visitors and through-travellers and reduce or eliminate entry-waiting times
- With stakeholders, develop an action plan

## Middle Bow Valley

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*Wildlife habitat and movement corridors are maximized to the extent that permanent facilities allow and Parks Canada and CPR work to resolve wildlife mortality. All partners work to protect the springtime needs of wildlife. Visitors use a variety of transportation options to enjoy the exceptional scenery and wildlife viewing along the Bow Valley Parkway. Through travellers on the Trans Canada Highway are aware that they are in a national park and of the international significance of the mitigation measures that have been incorporated for their safety and to protect wildlife*

### Priority Actions

- With a broad range of stakeholders, develop a detailed action plan for the Middle Bow Valley at its future best
- Minimize the potential for displacement or habituation of sensitive wildlife in the important montane habitats along the lower Bow Valley Parkway
- Participate in the regional transit system
- Provide opportunities for through travelers to learn about the area

## Lake Louise Area

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*Parks Canada and CPR collaborate to resolve grizzly bear mortality and a self-sustaining population exists while human-bear conflict is minimized. Visitors enjoy the wide range of services which are provided. Traffic congestion is addressed through transit options and other innovative approaches*

### Priority Actions

- Continue actions to improve visitor opportunities and wildlife habitat
- Work with CPR to resolve wildlife mortality
- Parks Canada's Ski Area Management Guidelines, Site Guidelines and Long-Range Plans will guide all future ski area management at Lake Louise ski area, including summer use
- Participate in the regional transit system
- Protect the core grizzly bear breeding area



## Banff National Park of Canada

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[www.pc.gc.ca/banff](http://www.pc.gc.ca/banff)



## North Saskatchewan

*The feasibility of re-introducing caribou is investigated. The area provides exceptional backcountry opportunities for adventurous visitors and outstanding day hiking near the Icefields Parkway*

### Priority Actions

- Investigate the feasibility of re-introducing caribou
- Use fire to restore and maintain montane habitat
- Maintain day use trails and protect the wilderness experience of the more remote areas
- Highlight the story of Howse Pass

## Spray Area

*The Middle Spray/Bryant functions effectively as a major grizzly bear reproductive area and visitors enjoy a variety of superlative backcountry recreation opportunities in an accessible wilderness setting*

### Priority Actions

- Protect the core grizzly bear breeding area in the Bryant/Spray area
- Remove or relocate the Bryant shelter
- Work with BC Parks and Alberta Parks to enlarge the World Heritage Site
- Maintain existing hiking, horse and bike trails

## Timelines

- The public review period for the draft plan will run from mid-October to mid-November.
- Following the public review period we will revise the plan.
- The plan will be submitted to the Minister for approval early in 2010.

## How Can I Participate?

Background information on the plan review (look for the “Help Shape Your Heritage” link on the right hand side of the main page) is available on-line at:  
[www.pc.gc.ca/banff](http://www.pc.gc.ca/banff)

Attend our planning forum in Banff on October 29 and 30 at the Banff Centre

Obtain a copy of the draft updated park management plan, by contacting Mike Murtha at [mike.murtha@pc.gc.ca](mailto:mike.murtha@pc.gc.ca) or 403 762 1523

Talk to us in person or send us your comments:

[Parks.chats@pc.gc.ca](mailto:Parks.chats@pc.gc.ca)